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Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

Implementation Committee

Second meeting
Geneva, 12 December 2013

Report of the Implementation Committee on its second meeting

I. Attendance and organizational matters

1. The second meeting of the Implementation Committee under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was held on 12 December 2013 in Geneva.

2. The following members of the Implementation Committee took part in the meeting: Mr. Attila Tanzi (Chair), Mr. Saghit Ibatullin (Vice-Chair), Ms. Vanya Grigorova, Mr. Kari Kinnunen, Mr. Johan Gerrit Lammers, Mr. Stephen McCaffrey, Ms. Anne Schulte-Wülwer-Leidig, Mr. Aliaksandr Stankevich and Mr. Ivan Zavadsky. The meeting was also attended by the observers from Lithuania, the European Eco-Forum and the University of Luxembourg.

3. The Committee adopted the agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.WAT/IC/2013/3.

II. Requests for advice, submissions and Committee initiative

4. Prior to its second meeting, the Committee received information provided by Mr. Bakytzhan Bazarbek, who indicated that he represented an environmental non-governmental organization (NGO) named ECOSOS based in Astana. Mr. Bazarbek expressed concerns regarding difficulties in transboundary water cooperation in the Irtysh River Basin, shared by the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, China and Mongolia, and also referred to the situation in the Ili River Basin which is shared by China and Kazakhstan.

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5. The Committee, without prejudice to any future decision and within the framework of its information gathering function, requested its Chair to write a letter to the concerned Parties, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation, enclosing the information provided by Mr. Bazarbek and the analytical report on the matter presented by the Vice-Chair of the Committee. The letter should ask the two Parties for their views on the matter and for any further information that they might consider appropriate. The letter should request a reply if possible prior to the Committee's next meeting.

6. The Committee decided to thank Mr. Bazarbek for the information, as well as to inform him about the analytical report by the Vice-Chair and the decision to contact the two Parties concerned.

7. The representative of Lithuania, present as an observer, expressed her interest in the procedures of the Committee to facilitate implementation of the Convention by Lithuania and its neighbouring countries vis-à-vis each other. The Committee described its functions and emphasized the unique opportunity provided by the advisory procedure, which is in line with the distinctive collaborative spirit of the Convention. It noted that, ideally, Parties would jointly request advice from the Committee about their efforts to implement the Convention vis-à-vis each other, while the advisory procedure also provides for a unilateral request for advice.

8. The Committee took note of the correspondence between the Chair of the Implementation Committee of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and the Legal Service of the European Commission with regard to Party-to-Party submissions by European Union member States under the above-mentioned mechanism.

9. The Committee exchanged views on the possibility of detailing general criteria or factors to guide the determination of when a Committee initiative might be started. The Committee agreed to review this matter at a later stage as more experience was needed before embarking on such an activity.

III. Relevant activities of other bodies under the Convention

10. The secretariat informed the Committee of the outcomes of the eighth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management (Geneva, 25–26 September 2013).

11. In particular, the secretariat summarized the discussions in the Working Group on the possible need for the introduction of reporting under the Convention. Despite the reporting done under various international agreements in the water sector, the Committee members expressed a belief that an appropriate, tailor-made reporting mechanism would assist Parties in implementing the Convention and reiterated that such a reporting mechanism would be useful for providing the Committee with the information it needs to carry out its functions.

12. The Committee discussed how to be involved in the development of the draft analysis on the need for reporting under the Convention. The draft analysis was to be prepared by the Convention's Bureau, with the help of the secretariat, and was then to be submitted for comments to the Implementation Committee and subsequently to the ninth meeting of the Working Group (Geneva, 25–26 June 2014). The Committee agreed that Mr. Lammers would coordinate comments by the Committee.

IV. Strategy for publicizing the mechanism and facilitating its use

13. The Committee discussed the strategy and modalities for further promoting and publicizing its work. The Committee members considered the possibility of organizing a series of seminars on international water law in order to promote the mechanism to facilitate and support implementation and compliance. Two members of the Committee also informed participants about the preparation of articles on the mechanism to be published in the near future in peer-reviewed journals.

14. The secretariat informed the Committee of the efforts taken to publicize the work of the Committee by its own resources and encouraged Committee members to use all opportunities to raise awareness about the mechanism to facilitate and support implementation and compliance such as presentation of the mechanism at various forums and events, including outside the Convention's programme of work.

V. Programme of work and schedule of future meetings

15. The Committee reviewed the decisions it had taken in the meeting and the matters it was likely to address at its next meeting.

16. The Committee agreed to hold its third meeting on 15 and 16 May 2014, with the understanding that the meeting might be reduced to one day depending on the workload. The Committee took note of the date preliminarily reserved for its fourth meeting (2–3 December 2014). The Committee also discussed the venue for the next meeting and agreed to take a decision on the venue in the coming few months.

VI. Other business

17. The Committee discussed the possibility of developing a proposal for its rules of procedure to be submitted for adoption by the Meeting of the Parties, at its next session or at a following session thereafter. The Committee agreed that such proposal, to be developed on the basis of decision VI/1, its annex I, the rules of procedure of the Meeting of the Parties, and the other rules of procedure, should take into account the experience in the application of the latter. It was therefore decided to review this matter at a later stage.

VII. Adoption of the report

18. The Committee entrusted the secretariat to prepare and circulate the draft meeting report. The Committee agreed to discuss and approve the meeting report through electronic communication means.